

August 10, 1984

Dear Manufacturer:

CD-84-11(LD)

Subject: Use of 5W Fuel Efficient Oil in Emission and Fuel
Economy Data Vehicles

Our recent letter no. CD-84-5 (LD), subject: "Use of low viscosity engine oil in test vehicles," dated April 19, 1984, indicated that 5W-30(40) oil should not be used in test vehicles beginning with the 1986 model year. This prohibition was based upon our determination that such oils were not generally available, and hence, not representative of the oils likely to be used by consumers. In response to this prohibition, several major vehicle manufacturers have initiated or committed to implement programs directed at expanding the availability of and encouraging the use of such oils. Based upon the presumption that these efforts will successfully stimulate general availability of 5W-30(40), SF service designation, fuel saving oils, EPA will permit the use of such oils in test vehicles for the 1986 and 1987 model years. The policy guidelines accompanying our letter dated March 24, 1981 regarding the use of SF multigrade fuel efficient oils will still apply.

It remains our position that it is not appropriate for vehicle manufacturers to receive credit for the fuel savings benefit of an oil that is not generally available and not likely to be used. In the case of SF multigrade, 5W-30(40) oil, there does not appear to be any particular factor restricting their use other than availability. There does not appear to be a significant price differential compared to other SF multigrade oils and the "SF" and "5W" terms provide reasonable generic identifiers to enable the consumer to locate the appropriate product to use. Hence, we believe there is a strong likelihood that the programs being implemented by vehicle manufacturers will successfully stimulate the market demand which should in turn result in increased availability.

We will periodically examine the availability of these oils over the next year or so and, based upon this review, issue guidance for the 1988 and subsequent model years. If for any reason our presumption that these oils will become generally available does not prove to be true we will again consider prohibiting the use of these oils.

One manufacturer submitted a proposal containing a list of areas that EPA could require a manufacturer to satisfy to be permitted to use 5W-30 oil. That proposal is enclosed. Several manufacturers have committed to programs satisfying each of these criteria. The existence of these commitments is what has allowed us to conclude these oils are likely to become available in the near future. Although it is not mandatory for manufacturers wishing to use 5W oils in test vehicles to commit to each of these areas, we hope each firm will do its fair share. However, as a prerequisite to using 5W oil in official test vehicles, the manufacturer must, at minimum, clearly recommend such oils in its owner's manual as the preferred oil for normal use up to an ambient temperature of 100 F and they must give assurance that such oil will be made available at its new car dealers.

Sincerely yours,

Robert E. Maxwell, Director
Certification Division
Office of Mobile Sources

Enclosure

PROPOSAL
SAE 5W-30 ENERGY CONSERVING ENGINE OILS

Allow The Manufacturer To Use SAE 5W-30 Oils For MY 1986
Data/Fuel Economy Testing IF:

Oil is Available at the New Car Dealer Level

Dealers are Specifically Instructed as to the Importance of
Using the Correct Oil

The Oil is Clearly Designated in the Owner's Manual (and Elsewhere) as "Preferred"

The Manufacturer Commits to Some Acceptable (To EPA) Owner Awareness Effort

The Manufacturer Commits to an Effort (Acceptable to EPA) to Encourage Greater Availability in Retail Outlets